

# Short synacthen test

## Diabetes and Endocrinology Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

You have been referred for a short synacthen test. The aim of this leaflet is to give you as much information as possible about this particular test before you come to hospital for the test.

### What is a short synacthen test?

A short synacthen test is used to assess how much of a steroid hormone called cortisol your body is producing. It takes about an hour and a half to complete and so you will only have to be at hospital for a few hours.

At hospital, you will have a small needle called a cannula inserted into a vein either in your hand or your arm. Once the cannula has been inserted, the doctor will draw a sample of blood from it. This blood sample is sent to the laboratory so that they can measure the amount of cortisol your body is producing on its own.

You will then be given an intravenous injection of synacthen. This is a synthetic version of a hormone called adrenocorticotrophic hormone (most commonly referred to as ACTH), which your body produces naturally.

The synacthen stimulates your body to produce more cortisol and this is then measured by drawing two further blood samples from the cannula, at 30 to 40 minute intervals after the drug has been given. The cannula is then removed and you can go home.

## Why do I need the test?

The test is usually carried out because patients have low levels of cortisol but your consultant will discuss with you the particular reason for the test in your case.

## What are the risks?

Very rarely people may develop an allergic reaction to the synacthen, for example a rash (25 cases reported in the UK since 1963). This is easily treated with antihistamines and should have no long lasting ill effect.

## What should I do before the test?

If you are on steroid tablets, do not take them on the morning of the test unless otherwise instructed. However, you should continue to take all your other prescribed medication and treatments before the test, unless you are instructed to do otherwise in the appointment letter for the test.

Please inform us if you are currently taking any other medication (prescription or non-prescription) containing **steroids** or have taken these in the past.

## What happens on the day of the test?

Please go to ward at Russells Hall Hospital stated on your appointment letter. You can eat and drink as normal. Please wear clothes that are comfortable to sit in for an hour and a half and do not bring valuables with you as the hospital cannot accept responsibility for your property.

If for some reason you are unable to come to your appointment, please telephone your consultant's secretary at the first available opportunity, so your appointment can be allocated to another patient and arrangements can be made for you to come in on another date.

## How will I find out the results of the test?

You will usually be given the results at your next outpatient appointment. The majority of results are available two to three weeks after you have had the test. You may receive a letter informing you of the result and any further tests that may need to be performed.

However, if the results are abnormal, a member of the Endocrine Department will telephone you to discuss the results and any further tests.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Diabetes and Endocrinology secretaries: 01384 456111 ext 3435 / 3489

Endocrine nursing team: 01384 456111 ext 7820

(8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/diabetes-and-endocrinology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

یہ کتابچہ آپ کو بڑے حروف کی لکھائی، سمعی صورت اور دیگر زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ برائے مہربانی فون نمبر 08000730510 پر رابطہ کریں۔